

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 COTONO 00305 181446Z

62

ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 EUR-12 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /076 W

----- 003157

R 181120Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY COTONOU

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8172

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

AMEMBASSY LOME

USMISSION USUN NY

C O N F I D E N T I A L COTONOU 0305

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, DM, US

SUBJ: FOREIGN MINISTRY PERSONNEL DISSOCIATE THEMSELVES FROM
GRILLING OF AMBASSADOR

REF (A) COTONOU 304, (B) COTONOU 256, (C) COTONOU 273,

1. THIS MONRING (FEB 18) I RECEIVED WHAT MUST BE CLASSIFIED AS THE MOST INCREDIBLE TELEPHONE CALL OF MY CAREER. DEPCHIEF OF PROTOCOL ALBERT AGOSSOU TELEPHONED TO SAY THAT AS ONE OF THE FORNMINISTRY OFFICERS WHO KNEW ME BEST, HE HAD BEEN DESIGNATED BY HIS "WORKING-LEVEL" COLLEAGUES AT THE MINISTRY TO CONVEY A MESSAGE TO ME AND MY GOVT. THE WORKING LEVEL AT THE MINISTRY HAD HEARD ABOUT THE TREATMENT ACCORDED OUR AMB AT THE PRESIDENCY LAST WEEK AND HAD MET AMONG THEMSELVES TO DISCUSS IT. HE WAS CALLING TO DISSOCIATE HIMSELF AND HIS COLLEAGUES FROM WHAT HAPPENED. THEY THOUGHT IT REPREHENSIBLE. THE FORNMINISTRY OFFICERS WERE ANXIOUS TO SEE RELATIONS WITH THE US IMPROVE. THEY REALIZED THAT THE US WAS ONE OF THE TRUE FRIENDS OF BENIN. OUR RELATIONS HAD SOURED BECAUSE THE "INSTANCES POLITIQUES" (MEANING THE POLITBUREAU AND REVOLUTION-ARY COUNCILS) HAD MEDDLED IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY'S DOMAIN.

CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 02 COTONO 00305 181446Z

AGOSSOU CONFIRMED THAT THE AMB'S INTERROGATORS WERE MEMBERS

OF THE POLITBUREAU.

2. I THANKED AGOSSOU FOR THIS GESTURE AND TOLD HIM TO ASSURE HIS COLLEAGUES THAT I WAS PLEASED BY THEIR ACT OF FRIENDSHIP. WASHINGTON WOULD BE INFORMED.

3. MINISTRY FUNCTIONARIES ALL ASSUMED THAT DEPARTURE OF AMB'S CHILDREN WITH HIM MEANT HE WAS BEING RECALLED PERMANENTLY. EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD ONLY RETURNED ON CONSULTATION.

4. COMMENT: THIS GESTURE CAN BE INTERPRETED IN TWO WAYS. FIRST AS AN ACT OF COURAGE BY A GROUP OF GENUINELY CONCERNED CIVIL SERVANTS. IF SO IT IS GRATIFYING TO KNOW THAT WE HAVE SUCH SUPPORT AT THE WORKING LEVEL. IN BENIN THESE FUNCTIONARIES RUN A REAL RISK TO THEMSELVES AND THEIR CAREERS BY WHAT THEY HAVE DONE. ON THE OTHER HAND WE CANNOT RULE OUT THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE TELEPHONE CALL WAS MADE ON ORDERS FROM THE FOREIGN MINISTER. IT COULD BE JUST ANOTHER EFFORT AT PATCHING UP THE SITUATION THE BENINESE GOVT HAS CREATED FOR ITSELF. EVEN IN THAT CASE, IT IS SIGNIFICANT. IT ILLUSTRATES HOW MUCH THE FOREIGN MINISTER FEARS REPRISALS BY THE US AND HOW FAR HE IS WILLING TO GO TO GET OUR RELATIONSHIP BACK TOGETHER. OF COURSE THIS CALL DOES SHOW THAT FOREIGN MINISTER ALLADAYE WAS COVERING UP WHEN HE TRIED TO DOWNPLAY THE OUTRAGEOUS TREATMENT OF AMB (REF A).
CHESHES

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NNN

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